



Pro Patria Press

#32

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Newsletter of the 31st Infantry Regiment Association

Reunion 04

Our next reunion will be 27-30 August 2004 at the Sheraton Hotel in Tacoma, Washington. Room rate is \$79 per night (also offered 3 days before and after the reunion). Hotel has shuttle service from SEATAC Airport and free rail service to downtown. Make your reservations by calling 1-888-627-7044 and tell them you're with the 31st Inf Regt Assn. Cutoff date for making reservations is 6 Aug 2004. Schedule of Events:



Friday – Arrival/Registration/Hospitality Rooms open

- Board of Directors Meeting 6:30pm

Saturday –Hospitality Rooms open. Tour options include:

- Tour of Ft Lewis
- Spirit of Washington Train/dinner package
- Seattle: Pike's Place Market

Sunday – Hospitality Rooms open

- Memorial Service – 10am
- Association Meeting – 2:30pm
- Banquet – 6:30pm

Monday – Departure/Check-out

4th Battalion on Three Continents



Our Polar Bears are spread across three continents again. HHC (-) and A Company went to **Afghanistan** in May to help train the Afghan Army. While their conditions are spartan, they have hot food, bunks, showers, latrines, and air conditioned tents. Although things have heated up again in Afghanistan, they are in a comparatively quiet part of the country. B Company (with elements of HHC) is pulling security duty for Special Forces elements in **Iraq**, where it is less quiet. C Company, with the Mortar Platoon and other HHC soldiers, is in **Djibouti**, East Africa and has also been in **Ethiopia**, training the armies of both countries.



On my recent trip to Iraq, your editor visited B Company just outside Baghdad and got to meet LTC John Spiszer, CPT Jake Kramer and several members of the company. One of their platoons was in a firefight the night before, but spirits were high. An infiltrator had gotten inside the perimeter and took refuge in a building, but 4 grenades sailed in after him. Another detonated outside, wounding PFC Chris Mattingly in the hand. SPC Morgan Cox went in to clear the building but the infiltrator was still alive and shot Cox in the arm. It was the last thing he ever did. Cox and Mattingly are recovering at Ft Drum.

CPT Atchison, the rear detachment commander at Ft Drum, brought the 4th Battalion Color Guard and Shanghai Bowl to the Reunion in Colorado Springs last month. Their participation is a great testament to the comradeship existing between the battalion and the association. On 11 March, the battalion will dedicate a memorial to the men killed in the helicopter crash at Ft Drum last year. *Donations can be mailed to: 4-31 INF Soldiers Memorial Fund, Attn: S1, Bldg. 10120, North Riva Ridge Road, Ft. Drum, NY 13602.* If you want to send cards, letters, or care packages (nothing that will melt) to the men overseas, send them to the company commanders, who will pass them on to their men (can no longer address “to any soldier”). Their addresses are:

CPT Scott Strickler	CPT Leith Ames	CPT Jacob Kramer	CPT Chris Fahrenbach
HHC 4-31 st Inf	A Co 4-31 st Inf	B Co 4-31 st Inf	C Co 4-31 st Inf
10 th Mtn Div	10 th Mtn Div	Unit #5L	10 th Mtn Div
Cp Phoenix	Cp Phoenix	APO AE 09335	APO AE 09363
APO AE 09356	APO AE 09356		

Association Commander’s Report

COL (Ret) Jerry Carlson (Cdr, 6-31st Inf 1969-70) reports: About 120 of us assembled at Colorado Springs for Reunion 03 in August. SPECIAL THANKS to Pat and Dean Hess for coordinating the entire affair, to CPT Atchison and the Color Guard for their participation with the Shanghai Bowl, to the Considines and Dolphins for making the business end run smoothly, and to LTG (Ret) Sam Wetzel, Honorary Colonel of the Regiment, for augmenting our drawing with Christmas Cakes and other goodies. We were blessed to have Chaplain Bill Burns, former 6-31st Infantry Chaplain 69-70 to lead our Memorial Service. He was supported by an absolutely magnificent quartet from Grace Church. Hopefully, we’ll be able to get a CD of their performance. Following the service, CPT Atchison gave us a briefing on what the 4th Battalion is doing overseas.

As most of you recall, members of C Company were killed in a Blackhawk crash at Ft Drum last year. The Association was very generous in supporting the Memorial Fund at our Dinner. D/6-31 attendees donated \$140.00-- \$1.00 for each KIA in Vietnam. In the drawing, Jeff Patton won 3 free room nights (\$92.00 each) and Bobby Johnson and Gary Spears won one night. They all donated the value of their rooms (total \$460.00) to the Memorial fund. Dean Hess donated \$27.00 of the 50/50 raffle to the fund. Jack Considine brought a Regimental Flag facsimile. Ron King won it and the raffle garnered \$145.00, also given to the fund. Finally, since the battalion has been deployed, the award fund has been dormant, so the membership voted that the \$500 in that fund be transferred to the Memorial fund. Our 4-31st contingent was absolutely overwhelmed by the Association’s generosity.

The membership re-elected our 2003 slate of officers to serve for another year. Our goal is to establish a firm foundation for those who will follow. We need your suggestions on what we need to do better or differently. Because our WWII and Korean War ranks are thinning, we need younger veterans (VN, DMZ-Korea, CONUS, and SWA) to join and stay active in the Association.

Looking Back

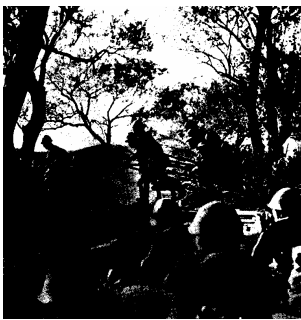
This is the last in our series on the regiment’s Bataan-era history. Our July issue described the regiment’s counterattacks at Mount Samat, Bataan’s closing battle. This issue describes the regiment’s last days and Bataan’s surrender.

Remnants of the 31st Infantry’s Antitank Company, totaling three 37mm antitank guns, were positioned to cover the Pilar-Bagac Road. As six Japanese tanks appeared, two of the 37mm guns fired over 40 rounds, mortally wounding the Japanese 7th Tank Regiment’s commander, Colonel

Sonoda, and disabling two of his tanks. The remaining tanks spotted the two antitank guns and knocked them both out. While the third gun was being re-positioned to join the fight, it came under artillery fire, causing First Sergeant Emanuel Hamburger and the gun's five crewmen to take cover in a dugout. Before taking cover, Hamburger ordered one of the men to remove the weapon's breech block. Seeing what appeared to be a platoon of Japanese approaching, Hamburger and two of the drivers fired at them through slits in the log embrasure. During a lull in the firing, three of the crewmen scurried out of the dugout and escaped. A fourth, Private Homer J. Hernandez of Overton, Texas also got out but was shot and bayoneted. As Hamburger and the others tried to follow, they were met by a spray of bullets, forcing them back inside. Private James Mines urged Hamburger to surrender. Hamburger tied his handkerchief to a stick and handed it to Mines who refused it. "Oh no, you're the Sergeant, you go first." At the age of 45, a veteran of the Mexican Expedition against Pancho Villa in 1916, combat with the 1st Division during World War I, nine years of service in China, and eight in the Philippines, Hamburger went into captivity.¹



Taking up a new position along the San Vicente River, what was left of the 31st sent patrols out to its flanks to establish contact with neighboring units. Major Addison W. Dunham, who had recently become the 1st Battalion Commander, was receiving a report from one of the patrols when three rounds of artillery came roaring in, making a sound like a freight train according to Corporal Joe Keys. Major Dunham (Cambridge, Nebraska), Corporal Charles Ball (Browning, Montana), and Privates Clyde L. Wasson (Bell, California) and Carl E. Gladwetz (home town unknown) were killed instantly. Charles Ball had been B Company's hero ever since he began picking snipers out of trees on the way to Abucay Hacienda in January, but an exploding artillery shell makes no exceptions for heroes. Now, half a world away from the Montana Indian Reservation he called home, Charles Ball lay dead. Joe Keys had part of his left arm blown off and Paul Kerchum took a large fragment in his right calf. The number of able-bodied men remaining in B Company had just declined by a third. Everyone who still could ran across the slope to take shelter from the barrage.



At 6 AM on April 7, Japanese artillery and infantry struck the Philippine Army's 51st Division on a trail adjacent to the 31st Infantry. Weakened by disease, hunger, and battle losses, the Filipinos could hold on no longer. Surviving Filipino soldiers melted into the jungle to save themselves. Soon the 31st was also under attack. Around 9 AM, the regiment was ordered to withdraw to an assembly area near Lamao. The withdrawal route traversed extremely rough and heavily vegetated terrain, causing units to become separated and men to become isolated groups of stragglers. They did not know it, but the entire II Corps was evaporating. Philippine Army, Philippine Scout, and American troops became intermingled in the general retreat. When the 31st Infantry's remnants reached the Alangan River, there were only around 300 effectives left.

By the evening of April 8, the situation had become hopeless. Senior officers were told that General King would surrender the Bataan Force the next morning. At 7 AM on April 9, radio operators listening to General King's command frequency heard "DITCH, DITCH, DITCH", the

¹ Remarkably, ISG Hamburger (Seattle, WA) would survive, remaining in the Army after the war. PVT James E. Mines (Russellville, AL) also survived the war. The other soldier who surrendered with Hamburger was PVT Cecil W. Bradshaw (home town unknown). Bradshaw had less than a month to live. He died in captivity at Camp O'Donnell on April 25, 1942.

coded signal to surrender. Although exhausted and dispirited, the 31st did not surrender of its own accord. Rather than issuing the order to surrender, officers told their men of the situation and advised them they could decide for themselves what to do. Some of the stronger officers, including Major Peter Calyer, the 31st's Operations Officer, led a group into the Mariveles Mountains to become guerillas.

When word of the surrender reached H Company, Sergeant Earl Walk had one 81mm mortar round left. He set the mortar to fire at maximum range, fired the 6 lb. projectile at an unseen foe, had his men disassemble the sights and tripod, and scattered pieces of the weapon into the jungle as they marched down the trail toward an unknown fate. One of the regiment's last casualties that day was Major Lloyd C. Moffit, killed by a shrapnel wound to the head in an air attack less than an hour before the surrender. The plucky little major had been relieved of command in March after accidentally shooting himself in the foot while briefing his officers with a drawn pistol, but he gamely stayed with the 2d Battalion as its Executive Officer to the very end.

At the time of the surrender, the 31st Infantry's HQ was collocated with the headquarters of II Corps and the Philippine Division on Signal Hill, a promontory of Mount Bataan known as "Little Baguio" for its cool breezes and breathtaking view.² Lieutenant Colonel Jasper Brady told his security detail to bury the regiment's most cherished possessions to keep them from falling into Japanese hands. Major General Maxson S. Lough, Colonel Harrison Browne and several officers who had been transferred from the 31st to corps staffs or other units before the war were present at the time.

Around 8 AM, Staff Sergeant Joe Crea (Headquarters Company), Corporal Bob Scruby (F Company), and Staff Sergeant Jim Steed (H Company), wrapped the regimental colors, national colors, a regimental photo album, and several other items of historical value in waxed canvas. The items were placed in a field safe that was buried face down to a depth of four feet on the east side of the gravel trail from Signal Hill. Leaves were spread over the site to make it appear undisturbed.³ Near that time, Corporal Lou Read (Antitank Company) recalls seeing Master Sergeant Stefan Widerynski (Service Company), Sergeant Steed, and Captain Herbert H. Eichlin (L Company) also burying footlockers containing pistols, Philippine Pesos, and the regiment's records nearby.⁴

Most of the campaign's survivors were herded into columns and marched 68 miles north to Camp O'Donnell. More died of exhaustion, disease, and execution by their captors. Their trek, marked by the extreme brutality of their Japanese guards, became known as the Bataan Death March. Not all of the 31st's survivors surrendered. Some managed to link up with bands of their comrades and Filipino guerillas to continue hindering the Japanese in any way they could. Those too weak to run or just plain unlucky were summarily executed if captured later.

Since Corregidor had not yet fallen, some escaped to the island by barge or anything that would float. Among them were Joe "the kid" Johnson and Dale Snyder, best friends since they met at

² Signal Hill, a promontory on the slopes of Mount Bataan, is served by a steep gravel road leading down to kilometer post 97.8 on the Mariveles-Bagac Road.

³ A comment appears in John W. Whitman's book *Bataan, Our Last Ditch* (Hippocrene Books, NY, 1990) that CPT George Sansep burned the 31st's colors to keep them from falling into enemy hands. His account is not about the US 31st Infantry Regiment, but refers instead to the burning of the Philippine Army 31st Division's colors.

⁴ SSG Crea (Panama City, FL) survived the war, remained in uniform after his release from captivity and retired from the Air Force as a Master Sergeant in 1964. CPL Scruby (Chillicothe, MO) died in captivity at Cabanatuan on May 18, 1942. MSG Widerynski (Manila, PI) died on a detail at Clark Field on December 11, 1943. CPT Eichlin (Easton, PA) died aboard the "Hell Ship" *Oryoku Maru* in 1944.

Fort McDowell, California on the way to the Philippines over a year earlier. Johnson ran into Snyder around dusk on the day of the surrender. Both still had their weapons and the Japanese had not yet reached their location near the tip of the Bataan Peninsula. After searching the beach in vain for anything that would float, they saw a Navy launch headed for Corregidor. Yelling at the top of their lungs, they plunged into the water and swam faster than they ever thought they could. The launch slowed nearly to a stop but was so overloaded it looked as if it might capsize if one of them tried to come aboard. Rather than leave them behind, someone threw them a line and they were towed nearly five miles to Corregidor. The trip was dark and frightening, particularly with the Japanese closing the door behind them and sharks infesting the waters they traveled. On Corregidor they were fed a canteen cup of cracked wheat and condensed milk, given a rifle and some clean clothes, and attached to the 4th Marines for beach defense duty.

The Marines treated escapees from Bataan like heroes, but the escape was only temporary. Within days, Japanese artillery began turning the island into a mass of dust, debris, and flying splinters. Troops spent their days in Malinta Tunnel and nights manning beach defenses. Finally, on May 5, the expected amphibious assault came. Japanese troops landed on the side of the island opposite Johnson and Snyder's position. At dawn, a Marine captain jumped into the shell hole where a squad of soldiers and Marines had established a fighting position. He said the Japanese were between them and the tunnel and things looked bad. Around 1 PM Japanese and American voices called out across the island saying the garrison had been surrendered by General Wainwright. With nowhere left to run, men yielded to the inevitable and shuffled under guard into the 92d Coast Artillery Regiment's abandoned motor park, nicknamed "the garage". Men were selected to perform funeral duty, first roping Japanese bodies into a pile and setting them afire and then doing the same with dead Americans. They were eventually herded onto barges, taken to Manila, and paraded through the city to Bilibid Prison. Several days later, they were loaded onto cattle cars and taken to Cabanatuan, a camp housing over 5000 Americans. Unlike the men captured on Bataan, those captured on Corregidor were spared the Death March, but that did not assure their survival.

Dale Snyder escaped from the train transporting POWs from Bilibid to Cabanatuan. When recaptured, he was beheaded by a Japanese captain named Maita on May 30, 1942. Fifteen year-old Joe Johnson survived Bataan, Corregidor, and the infamous labor detail at Nichols Field from which many did not return. He was beaten, had his grave dug, survived the sinking of two "hell ships", lived through a coal mine cave-in in Japan, and was only 25 miles from one of the atomic bomb blasts, but he survived to write Dale Snyder's nephew of the experience at the age of 73.

Another group that had escaped to Corregidor was led by Captain Earl Short, the 31st Infantry's former Headquarters Commandant. The night before the surrender, Short took Sergeants Howard J. Linn and Thomas Proulx with the Shanghai Bowl and 99 cups by barge to Corregidor. There, they hoped to get the treasure out by submarine. For a month, the isolated island endured nearly constant aerial bombing and artillery bombardment. Finally, with the garrison's collapse imminent, Short decided he could no longer leave the regiment's proudest treasure at risk. At around 11 PM on May 2, Short's detail buried the bowl and cups on the west side of Malinta Hill just above the Bottomside Bakery. There it would remain for four years—a mute testimony to the Polar Bear Regiment's determination to keep its traditions alive.